

CAN WE KEEP HIM?

Short Encounters for
Characters of Any Level

BY ALAN TUCKER



CAN WE KEEP HIM?

A handful of short encounters and story hooks
that may cause your party
to question their desire to have pets...

Designed for characters of all levels

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BUT, I WANT A PET...

Pets are fun! Everyone loves pets— except DMs who often already have too much to keep track of while running an adventure. So, how can we gently dissuade the party from wanting to befriend every stray animal or baby monster they run across in the game?

Within are a handful unusual circumstances built around the idea adopting pets. Designed for many different levels of play, these encounters should encourage your party to pause the next time they run across something cute and fuzzy.

Note: For each of the encounters, text within a box is intended to be read aloud or paraphrased. Where necessary, book and page references are given for monster stats or specific items. Also included is a brand new monster, the **Black Rose Bush**, with full stats and suggestions for adjustments to suit many party levels.

If you enjoy this collection of encounters, please take a moment to rate it and leave a comment or review!
And be sure to check out my other products!

Alan Tucker also writes fantasy and science fiction novels and you can find links to all of his books (*several are FREE!*) at **www.AlanTucker.net**

HEY, MISTER CAN YOU HELP ME?

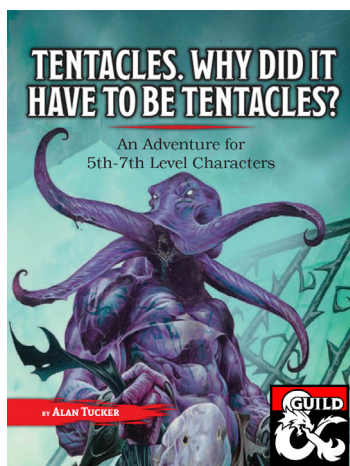
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Characters of Any Level



DRUID SUBCLASS: CIRCLE OF THE ELEMENTAL

A new subclass for druid
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Can't remember which spells are eligible for a
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class and spell level

FREE!



LOVE IS FOREVER, POLYMORPH IS NOT

ENVIRONMENT: ANY EXCEPT URBAN

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: ANY

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

Your day traveling through the wilderness has been dreary and uneventful—the untold lot of the adventuring life.

A rustling in the undergrowth to your right, however, snatches your flagging attention and you see a ball of fur and fluff barrel onto the path ahead of you. A bright-eyed puppy, ears flopping and jaws snapping, is clumsily chasing after some flying insect. As you watch, the small canine makes a heroic leap toward the bug, but falls comically short and the insect flutters away. The puppy jumps up and, having lost sight of its prey, looks around, its playful eyes finally landing on you for the first time. Its ears perk up and its tail wags with renewed enthusiasm as it issues an adorable bark of challenge.

What in the world is a puppy doing out alone in the wilderness? The players will soon find out, however, allow them a few minutes to engage with the fuzzy ball of energy before revealing the puppy's true identity—especially if you have players who have been begging for some sort of animal companion to join them on their adventures.

After an appropriate amount of time, up to the DM's discretion, but less than an hour, read the following to the character who is either holding or most closely attached to the puppy:

The energetic bundle of cuteness suddenly stops and cocks its head, looking at you with the sweetest, deep brown eyes. Those precious eyes turn reptilian and the puppy's body grows and morphs into an enormous [insert color] dragon!

The beast snarls and looks down at you. "Where is he?!"

The adorable puppy is, in fact, a **dragon** who has been the victim of a *polymorph* spell. The DM can choose an appropriate size and color for the monster, according to the party level and terrain.

This encounter can be one of combat or negotiation, depending on the DM's wishes. If a peaceful ending is desired, make the dragon as overwhelming and fearsome as necessary to discourage the players from taking hostile actions and ending up as an appetizer.

The dragon is looking for the wizard who managed to land the successful *polymorph* upon its perfect reptilian form. If asked about what happened, the dragon, Ixmatran, will snort and explain:

"I was about to enjoy a bite of wizard— a rare delicacy— when the slippery weasel pulled out a scroll and somehow overcame my defenses!" The dragon's eyes narrow. "You don't look nearly as tasty, but my palate is becoming less choosy with each passing moment. Have you anything interesting to offer in place of your flesh?"

The dragon is bent on revenge against the wizard who managed to escape its clutches and will accept help from the players in tracking down the magic-user and allowing the dragon the pleasure of its interrupted meal. Ixmatran can offer a description of the wizard and show the party where the altercation occurred if they so desire, in order to pick up clues as to who the wizard might be, or where he may have fled.

ALTERNATIVES:

This encounter can be used to introduce a recurring foe for the players, either in the form of the dragon or the wizard. It could also be used to send the players on a particular quest in order to appease the dragon. As mentioned, it can also simply be a combat encounter if the dragon is not overly intimidating for the party.

Ixmatran's inability to save against the *polymorph* spell, regardless of the dragon's power level, can be explained by having used up all their legendary resistances earlier in the tussle with the wizard, who also happened to be of the school of divination with access to a less-than-favorable portent roll to inflict upon Ixmatran.

The encounter can be set in any type of terrain appropriate for the DM's campaign and matched with a suitable color of dragon.

THE GRIFFON OR THE EGG

ENVIRONMENT: SMALL VILLAGE OR WILDERNESS

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 2-4

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: 5-10

“Griffon egg for sale!” a bedraggled merchant barks out. “Ride the skies on your own magnificent and loyal steed!”

The merchant’s name is Horace Wainright and he is, in fact, selling the egg of a large flying beast, but it isn’t a **griffon**. It’s a **peryton**.

Horace can be encountered in a rural town or village, or as a traveling merchant in a wilderness setting. He recently came upon the egg after a band of adventurers raided a clutch of peryton nests a few miles away. One egg escaped being pulverized and Horace seized the opportunity to make some coin. He may or may not be aware of the egg’s true parentage, depending on the DM’s wishes.

Horace will begin his bargaining at 500g, but can be easily talked down to a more affordable price of the DM’s choosing. He will extol the virtues of griffons as mounts for noble adventurers, such as the party before him, and scoff at any rumors of the difficulties of training the dangerous beasts the party may have heard— while reducing his asking price as much as necessary to turn his find into cash.

A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check** of the egg can reveal its viability, but that it is not going to hatch imminently— perhaps in the next few days. For the purposes of the adventure, griffon and peryton eggs are indistinguishable.

If the party strikes a bargain with Horace, they can be on their way with their purchase, only to discover its true nature during their travels in the next day or two (DM’s discretion). If Horace can’t persuade the party to buy his discovery, they can come upon his demise (or aid in his rescue) on the road at some point in the future.

For their part, one (or more) of the perytons was away from the nests on a hunting excursion when the devastation happened. Since then, they have been hunting for the perpetrators, but happen to catch the smell of their egg and aim to take back what is theirs...

PERYTON

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil (MM page 251)

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Senses passive Perception 15

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dive Attack. If the peryton is flying and dives at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits with a melee weapon attack, the attack deals an extra 9 (2d8) damage to the target.

Flyby. The peryton doesn’t provoke attacks of opportunity when it flies out of an enemy’s reach.

Keen Sight and Smell. The peryton has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The peryton makes one gore attack and one talon attack.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage.

ALTERNATIVES:

Multiple perytons can be used to challenge a higher level party. They may also be under the influence of an evil wizard or a coven of hags if the DM desires a particularly difficult encounter.

Horace could easily become a recurring character if the party buys the egg, or if they manage to rescue him from the peryton attack on the road later.



FEED ME, SEYMORE!

ENVIRONMENT: WILDERNESS

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 4-6

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

The woods seem particularly fresh and alive as you pass through the verdant foliage and beams of sunlight pierce the canopy in many places, creating a virtual shower of warm rays.

Suddenly, in front of you a fluffy puppy bounces out from under a bush with a playful bark and wagging tail.

The puppy is actually an unfortunate **human druid** (*MM page 346*), named Seymore Tallfellow, who failed his saving throws and has been charmed by a **black rose bush** (*details on the next page*). The bush instructed him to lure more creatures to its clutches and, upon noticing the party trudging through the forest, he decided the best way to attract their attention without arousing suspicion was to take the form of an adorable puppy.

Seymore will jump and bark, attempting to gain the adventurers' interest and get them to chase or follow him to where the bush resides, several yards away from the path or road that the party had been following. Once at least two

party members are in range of its vines, the black rose bush will attack.

Seymore will try to passively aid the bush in combat (perhaps casting *entangle* or some other helpful spells), but will not engage the party directly as the bush knows it may lose control over him if it commands Seymore to do so. If the party manages to break the bush's hold over Seymore by using *dispel magic* or a similar effect, he will quickly apologize and try to flee in fear, even if they are engaged in combat with the bush.

Any party members who succumb to the bush's charm ability are instructed to drop their weapons and sit calmly next to the dangerous plant. Charmed players can choose to encourage their fellow party members to stop fighting and join them if the DM wishes.

If the bush is defeated, the charm on Seymore wears off and he will thank the party profusely for their aid and express his sorrow for his previous behavior while relaying the story of his unfortunate circumstances.

ALTERNATIVES:

The black rose bush can be adapted for parties of many levels by adjusting its armor class, hit dice, damage, and save DC for its charming fragrance ability as suggested in the table below.

BLACK ROSE BUSH LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS

Party Level	AC	Hit points	Damage	Save DC	CR
1-3	13	68 (8d10 + 24)	4 (1d4 + 2)/2 (1d4)	13	2
4-6	as stated in description				
7-9	17	153 (18d10 + 54)	12 (2d8 + 3)/7 (2d6)	16	8
10+	19	221 (26d10 + 78)	17 (3d8 + 4)/10 (4d4)	17	13

The DM may also choose to add other monsters, such as the **shambling mounds** (*MM page 270*) or **otyughs** (*MM page 248*) as suggested in the black rose bush's description on the next page. These monsters are not charmed by the bush, but rather willing accomplices in gathering food.

The black rose bush may be a guardian or pet for some other sinister force within the woods, such as a morally twisted druid or evil fey creature. Seymore can be useful as a quest giver, or a method to impart some important information to the players for a future adventure.



BLACK ROSE BUSH

Though incredibly rare, the black rose bush has nonetheless been the subject of tales of horror from any fortunate enough to escape its thorny grasp. Entire forest groves have been burnt to ash just from the rumor of one of these intelligent, carnivorous plants living within.

Beguiling Aroma. The pungent fragrance of the black rose bush has a potent persuasive effect on creatures of nearly all types. Only those with the strongest fortitudes— or those with elvish blood— are able to resist its charms. As elves can withstand the bush's most effective tool for gathering food, it seeks to destroy them any chance it can. Some even whisper the bush's origins lie in ancient history as an elven botanist's experiment gone terribly wrong.

Extended Reach. Supplementing its more subtle weapon are a number of incredibly strong, prickly vines that can lash out many feet and snare unsuspecting prey from a distance. The vines then drag the hapless victim closer to the bush to allow the soothing fragrance to quiet its struggles, or simply squeeze the life out of it so the bush may feed.

Unlike most plants, whose roots gather nutrients from the soil, black rose bushes gain sustenance from the blood of their unfortunate victims as it seeps into the earth from the many puncture wounds inflicted by the bush's sharp thorns. As result, scavengers, such as **shambling mounds** or **otyughs**, are sometimes attracted to the bush by the prospect of free meals. The bush will often take advantage of these creatures, using them for added protection from adversaries who wield fire or try to attack the bush from a distance.

BLACK ROSE BUSH

Large plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Skills Perception +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Senses passive Perception 15

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Charming Fragrance. Any creature within 5 feet of the black rose bush must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be charmed by the black rose bush's intoxicating aroma. Charmed creatures may attempt to make the save again at the end of each of their next two turns. If they fail both of those saving throws, they may not attempt another save for 24 hours, unless they are instructed by the black rose bush to do something directly against their nature (e.g. kill themselves). The black rose bush can convey simple commands, such as "Find me food," or "Protect me," by pheromones (smell) to targets it has charmed. A successful save means the creature is immune to the effects of the fragrance for the next 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The black rose bush makes four attacks with its vines.

Thorny Vines. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 35 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage and 5 (2d4) piercing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws and the bush can't use the same vine on another target. Each turn the target is grappled, the vine deals 5 (2d4) piercing damage and pulls it 10 feet toward the bush's body.



COME HOME, SPIKE!

ENVIRONMENT: WILDERNESS (HILLS OR MOUNTAINS)

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: 3-5

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

Only a few clouds mar the bright blue sky as you march along your path this day, your tasks ahead and behind you occupying your thoughts to a great degree.

In the distance to your left, you hear a melancholy shout, "Spike!" Several seconds later, the call is repeated. "Come here, Spike!"

The speaker is a **stone giant** child (*MM page 156, modified stats listed below*) who has wandered away from home, looking for his lost pet. If the party searches for the source of the sounds, they will locate and surprise the young giant as he is consumed by his need to find his companion.

If the adventurers ignore the calls, read the following:

The sounds gradually get closer until a few minutes later, a figure the size of a tall human stumbles onto the path [road] ahead of you. It turns to look at you with surprise, and then fear, on its face and you realize it is not a grown man, but rather a giant child.

The boy's name is Hurg and he has been well-schooled in the atrocities an adventuring party is capable of committing, however, he is desperate to find Spike and will swallow his fear to ask for help.

"Please, I have to find, Spike. My parents will never let me have a pet again if I lose him."

The party has a few choices at this point: they can help the boy find his pet; they can ignore him and move on; or they can attack the young giant.

Any **Wisdom (Insight)** checks will reveal that the boy is telling the truth, though he doesn't know what Spike is and can't describe his pet well enough for any *locate* magics to work, "He's big and spiky." Allow your players mull over what that might mean.

If they choose to help him, have the players roll **DC 8 Wisdom (Survival)** checks and read the following:

After an hour or more of searching, you find a set of tracks that look promising and lead to an isolated cave, tucked along a hillside and shrouded with brush.

Spike is a **basilisk** (*MM page 24*) and not a male at all, but an expectant mother with a newly laid clutch of eggs. If she feels the least bit threatened, or thinks Hurg is in danger, she will attack to protect him or her eggs.

Though Spike still cares for Hurg, the boy will not be able to persuade Spike to leave her eggs and he will become despondent over the situation, begging the party for help.

If the party initially chooses to ignore the distraught giant, the DM can have them encounter Spike farther down the path, or save the encounter for another time.

If they choose to attack him, Spike will leap from hiding somewhere close by and defend the boy ferociously.

STONE GIANT CHILD

Medium giant, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

ALTERNATIVES:

This encounter can be adjusted or expanded in a number of ways. Spike may have a mate, or even a full family, to help guard her eggs and provide a stiffer challenge for stronger parties. Hurg's parents can show up after searching for him and, upon finding him in the company of a band of blood-thirsty adventurers, throw the players into a tense situation! Stone giants are neutral in alignment, so will the party attempt to negotiate a peace with them or go full murder hobo and try to slaughter the whole family? Gaining the enmity, or gratitude, of a band of giants could be a fascinating plot hook for future adventures.

WILD KINGDOM

ENVIRONMENT: WILDERNESS, PREFERABLY FOREST

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: ANY

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

Traveling through this forest has been pleasant for the most part, but you sense something in the air this evening you can only describe as anticipation or tenseness.

While keeping your eyes peeled for a place to make camp, you hear a plaintive, animal cry just before a tiny, dark-furred creature bounds from the brush into your path. Tentacles wave with nervous energy from its shoulders.

A moment later the air behind the little newcomer shimmers and another, larger creature, with canine features and long, pointed ears, pops into existence. The dog bears its teeth and growls at the smaller, seemingly helpless beast.

The tiny creature is a **displacer beast** (*MM* page 81) cub (which experienced players will likely recognize) and the menacing canine is a **blink dog** (*MM* page 318). The players have stumbled onto an ancient conflict and must make a split-second decision: help one or the other creature, or do nothing and see what transpires.

While the displacer beast is only a newborn, and many players' first thoughts might be to keep it as a pet, the creatures are inherently lawful evil. The blink dog, on the other hand, is lawful good. Your party's general disposition along the good or evil spectrum may come into serious question depending on what comes next.

If the players do nothing, or aid the blink dog, the cub's parent(s) or pride will emerge from the forest, possibly already bloodied from combat before. The DM can determine an appropriate amount of adversaries to challenge their party.

If the party decides to help the cub, a pack of several blink dogs will arrive to join the fray. Again, it is left up to the DM to decide how difficult they wish the encounter to be by adjusting the number of dogs in the pack or by adding additional fey as suggested in the Alternatives section below.

DISPLACER BEAST CUB

Tiny monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 5 (2d4)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Avoidance. If the displacer beast is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds, and only half damage if it fails.

Displacement. The displacer beast projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this effect is disrupted until the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The displacer beast makes two attacks with its tentacles.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 1 (1d4 - 2) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

ALTERNATIVES:

This encounter offers many possibilities for further adventure. The blink dogs could be part of a Seelie Court (good fey) hunting party that has crossed into the Material Plane for a bit of sport. If the party has harmed or killed one or more of the dogs in order to protect the young displacer beast, the fey could become quite cross with the adventurers, leading to some interesting conundrums for the players— especially if their characters are of good alignment.

The displacer beasts could be from a breeding program run by a group of evil fey (Unseelie Court) who have plans to cause trouble in the Material Plane in the near future.

